

Interview with June Labbett

March 28/90

Our library did not really amount to that much, it was fairly good, we used the University library more... Two walls of books... Where is all this stuff now?

John - The book shelves are white oak...

Yes those are the ones... the same ones... they were pretty all full of books.

(Showed me the vase) Dot Jackson gave it to me. Dot Jackson and Zereda were very good friends and lived together for years. Zereda became head of PE when Margaret Eaton School joined with the university.

Our year has had regular reunions. We have had a really fun time. We just had our whatever last September at Dorothy Leggatt's farm. Our first one was our fortieth which was at Camp Ocono, which is our camp. Mary Keyes was my assistant at Camp Ocono for years, and Dot and Zereda were also on the staff at Ocono. Our Fortieth reunion was at camp, then we had one in Vancouver and last Fall we had one in Elmont (Ottawa). Now we are saying we should have one every year we are getting so old.

Yearbooks... Oracle? I don't remember that. Mesolae? This sounds to me like these were when the school was speech and literature thing. I think it probably stopped when the school switched to Physical Education. I had a hard time finding them because they were tucked away in a trunk downstairs... I don't know if they will be of any help.

We went to camp for a whole month. Camp Ocono was run by my husband and I for 30 years and now my daughter and her husband run it. It is north of Kingston. A girls camp.

Yearbooks came out every year. I just happen to have these two.

There were seventeen I think at the last reunion, but they are scattered all over. For instance, several came from, she is there, she is there... We have lost track of one. We have address to all our classmates. Just three dead. That's not bad for us eh?

No Alumnae any more. I went to some meetings a way back. It is no longer. Charlotte Layton was the one that did the newsletters always, she was the secretary of the school for years and years, and she is still alive. I have a little write up about her that was in the paper just last Summer, she is in Nova Scotia. I can't believe she is still alive, because I thought she was an

old lady then already. She was an old lady and there was a picture in the paper and someone sent it to me. She has got to be 90 or something. I have that and I am sure it is at camp. I will tell you to contact: Dorothy Walker could help you with Charlotte Layton. She (DW) would probably be good to help you with a lot. She is very keen and very interested in the school. She lives in Nova Scotia as well. She sometimes comes up to Toronto.

I have a couple of pictures of our reunion. (could not locate at the time)

I heard that the class ahead of us and behind us were going to try and get together, but I do not know if they ever did.

(Mailing questions to others) you could!

I went to Margaret Eaton School because I wanted to take Phys Ed. There was a University Phys Ed course but it was very theory oriented and I wanted to get more into sport. So that is why I went. I had known some graduates from Margaret Eaton School and I really liked what it had to offer. We took some of our classes at the University, but the one drawback was there was not degree from Margaret Eaton School until 1943, when they went with the university. That was I suppose that was a drawback, but we felt we got a better education at Margaret Eaton School. But that was the choice you had to make.

(you probably spent 5 hours a day in class) More than five. We were due at 415 Yonge at 9. But often we would come in at 8 o'clock for a swimming class or dance class. Then we had classes straight up to 12 o'clock. We would then rush to St. George street and have lunch. We were back in school by 1.30 and often did not get out till 5.00. Solid classes. The we did a lot of practice teaching at night. I still see Mrs. Somers standing up: "And now we need six volunteers for tomorrow night." We were teaching basketball in the West End, or anything anywhere, and it was all volunteer. It was good experience. We also went into the schools a day a week in our senior year we would go to schools.

(Options) I guess I would have gone to the U of T for three years. Diploma from the U of T? I do not remember that. All I remember is that you could get a degree from the U of T. Entrance requirements were the same, you needed grade 13.

(living) I went to Ontario Ladies College. My home was in Unionville. 15 miles North of Toronto by Markham. I think there were only five day students everyone else was in residence. There were very few students from Toronto.

Dorothy Jackson. Miss. Somers, Florence Somers was the

Principal. Elizabeth Wardley Raymer, who was a teacher of mine and later became director camp Tanamakoon. I have known her for a long time and we are very good friends, except that she is dead. Shirley Naylor. Madeleine Alein (check spelling). Dr. Ball was anatomy. Bruce McMurry (check spelling) was physiology. The instructors had long days too. (They taught class after class) Well, they had breaks, there were part time instructors. For example there was figure skating taught by one instructor, I don't know what else that gall did. I guess she had an other job some place. Madeleine Aline who taught interpretive dance. She must have worked other places. The people that were Full-time were Dorothy Jackson, Elizabeth Raymer, Florence Somers, and Shirley Naylor were the ones that were really there.

Elizabeth Raymer got married in 39 or so, resigned and came back after a little while. Not many people in those days worked when they got married. She came back just in 41 part-time. She wrote a marvellous poem though. We used to have a big demonstration every year; gymnastics, stunts, games, everything. It was held at the Eaton Auditorium, which is no longer, but we would do archery across the stage in the auditorium if you can believe it. Anyways, this poem, the voice group spoke, they had us all in Alto, Soprano, da da da da, and the Dance group danced to it, it was really effective. Elizabeth wrote it. Everyone laughs because when we get together at the reunion usually one of the first things we say is "Youth, we were given and precious we hold, we must strengthen that gift one hundred fold." I can almost go through it still...

About half our time was theory and half was practice. We used textbooks... I don't know if you would call them textbooks, but we had books that we had to buy. Archery Instruction and so on. I remember the archery one in particular it was just a little book, and you would buy one on everything.

If you did volunteer work, you would just have to find time to get your assignments done. (What kind of assignments) Dorothy Jackson was a very interesting lady. She had devious ways of doing things I guess. I remember a gymnastics class and we were just lined up scattered around the gym talking. She came in and was furious with us, we gathered, because we were not in open order ready to start work. So she went over to the window in the gym and stood like this (one arm across waist the other hand holding her chin). Then she just walked out and slammed the door. We came to and realized that we should be in open order. So we whipped into shape and she came back into the gym and was happy to see us in open order and went skipping in out of the lines. She stood in front of us and said (sternly), "You will have an assignment ex cathedra." We did not know what that was, but we finally gathered that we had to write about something that we knew nothing about. Talk about mosquitos or something and do an assignment. You never knew what she was going to do. It may

have nothing to do with the course either. Just keep us working. We had exams at the end. (grading) In archery, that was done at camp, badminton, they would grade you on improvement and how well you played. I remember folk dancing for instance, we had to do the highland fling, and we all had to face the outer wall, funny I haven't thought about this for years, and one of our friends, Kattie didn't know the Highland Fling at all, and we were being marked on it. Kattie was beside me, I said "just keep jumping Kattie, keep jumping." She did and passed, but did not know what was going on. That was how we were marked. You had all these different dance, books of them, they might say I would like you to instruct Rings on Her Fingers and Bells on Her Toes, or the Highland, and then someone would come around to observe our practice teaching in the schools, as they do now a-days.

(teams) We had teams, the problem was to find competition. It was difficult to find. The high schools we were not in that league. We couldn't be in the University league. We had games with University teams but just exhibition games. So really our games were against each other as a bonus we would play someone else occasionally. But we were out refereeing basketball games a lot. We were busy. It was fun though.

(women) At the time I never thought about it. It was just one of those things. It was a good school for Physical Education. I don't think it ever crossed my mind. It was the course I wanted.

(governance) The director, you mean the principal of the school, she must have reported to someone, but who I don't know. There must have been a board of directors but I don't remember anything about them. (advisory council) Was there? I don't think it was very active. (Alumnae advisory council) There was, you are making me remember things, (they met once a month) I would not be surprised. I can remember a lot of talk when they were talking about joining the university. And there was a group that was very much against it and another group that was very much for it. I can remember the talks going on that point. Amongst the student too. We were upset because we would not get a degree. We could not get to OCE (Ontario College of Education). And so we were really upset about that. We knew that when we were coming in and we should have accepted that when we came in and said okay. The arguments against it is that they thought they would lose a lot from the participation from the sports and that they were not going to learn to teach. More theory not practical. On the other side you would get a degree. It was not so much a problem in those days. Except, because we could not get into teacher's college, we could not teach in the public high schools, so we were really teaching in the Private Schools, which is an advantage now, or Y's. The one's that were teaching in public school probably went on to get a degree. Several of our group went on and ended up like Dorothy Leggatt at taught Phys Ed. at Queens, and Dorothy Walker went to get her doctorate, but that

was all after Margaret Eaton School.

For those who finished Margaret Eaton School school and wanted to get a degree, they would have to start over again. That was one of the great complaints, the U of T would not give us any credits for courses taken at Margaret Eaton School. Even though we had taken some of them at the U of T. Those who did this would think they knew Phys Ed. and would then take an arts course or maybe Phys Ed. I am not sure, but they would start all over again.

Miss Somers was excellent. She was very good. She was getting older, or rather, she seemed at the time that she was older. I think she died before the Sixties. Elizabeth Raymer died in the mid-Sixties. Miss Somers was a good leader. She also pushed for amalgamation with the U of T.

(Margaret Eaton) Tell me about her. I don't know much about her except that she was very interested in literature and speech and that is how the school started.

(Student life) There were various clubs as listed in the yearbook. I was probably a member of all of them. That was my trouble, I never concentrated on anything I loved all of them. I was not in Camera, or Dance, we did not have a Literature. I was probably in music, riding, badminton, skiing. I think everyone had to be involved in one club, but you could be involved in as many as you wanted as long as you could work them in. Most galls were very interested, some less. Life was busy and fun. We had a lot of fun as group. We worked hard. It was very physical. It seems we were always rushing to get to here and then to there... A. L. Cochrane taught swimming and also had a camp. He did not teach us, he was before our day, he was telling me that one day he walked into the girls's locker room, he was a great swimmer, but he said "I was walking through the girls' locker room to get to the door one day and there was girl standing there in her slip, and she jumped in behind the curtain and said, 'Oh, for a minute I thought you were a man.'"

I do not how he became involved with swimming. I think probably because he was so active with the Royal Life Saving Society. He was a good man. The school just wanted a good teacher, he just happened to be a male. (Forsyth - only full-time male...) I wonder why?

(Alumnae) Our class has stayed together but as far as furthering the profession as a group we have not done much. Individually a lot has been contributed. When the school was active the Alumnae was active. I think Charlotte Layton was the key person in that Alumnae group. She kept it rolling, kept the newsletter going...

Born in 1920, Unionville, Ontario, Canada, both parents born in

Canada. Our year was mostly Canadian, perhaps a couple of Americans. Both parents were Chiropractors, and two brothers and a nephew are Chiropractors.

I taught at Ontario Ladies College and taught Phys. Ed. and the principal told me I had to teach business because he did not have anyone to teach business but I did not know anything about business. I spent more time at the bank than at school learning how to write a cheque... Anyways I taught business for one year. I taught there three years. Then I taught at the YWCA in Toronto and I ended up as Metropolitan Phys Ed. I was supervising the Phys Ed. for the Y's. Part of my responsibilities included directing the Y camp, Camp Tonkawingo (spelling??). I did that for 4-5 Summers and then we bought our own camp. We were married in 49. We lived in Toronto. We bought it from Miss Halliday (spell??) who had had it for 25 years, she started it in 1925. Then we had four children...

My husband took business administration and he and his brother sold insurance. He did that for six years, worked at insurance in winter and did camp in the Summer. After that we both did camp Full-time... Camp Oconto. My daughter and her husband took it over. A large camp... 80 staff...

You should talk to Mary Keyes at McMaster... and Dorothy Walker would be a good one to contact and should know Charlotte Layton's address. (Mail to all) Some will answer some won't. This girl is super but has m.s... Joyce Bertram lives close to here. Barb Jones lives in Port Hope and taught at Bishop Strong for years. I think most people would try to answer. Dorothy Buck is still very active. Jerry is still teaching. I don't know what. Dorothy Walker became involved in CAHPER, became head of Physical Education for the province of Nova Scotia. A lot got married early and stopped. Joyce followed me in camp and came librarian. Dorothy Buck is very active. Betty Granstin is organist now. (church background in MES) not significant. Shirley Naylor married a McCaty who died during the war. She then married his brother, Chris. I think they still live in Toronto, possibly at 214 Wellesly, 924-1629 X Kay Cumming's husband worked at Trinity College School and her address may be found from there. Peggy Wilkin, Dianan Robinson and Adriane Adams are around Toronto area. Betty Snell, a 35 grad is now Betty Gilchrist. Her brother, John Bilchrist lives at 10 Wycwood Park in Toronto, and perhaps he can forward her address to you.

(Graduation list) We lived there from the Spring of 1951 to November 1954.

The fees were somewhat higher than most places. Most of the parents would have paid the education for the students. One couple was divorced, which was unusual for those days, and the mother went out selling books on the street to pay for her

daughter's education. Most of them had no financial worries and some, maybe one or two, were very well off. Being in Phys Ed. the teachers were very concerned that we be ladies at the same time. We had to wear hats. We were not allowed on the streets without wearing a hat. We had to be prim and proper. Because they did not want people to look at us and say they are those muscle bound phys ed students. This did not make a difference in the way they taught us Phys ed though. I guess this was not so odd in those days or out of place as it sounds now. Though I remember one girl who came to camp in September from out west in spiked shoes and fancy dresses thinking it was a drama school. She only lasted three or four days. Each year it seemed there would be two or three students who would leave during the first few months. Once a senior though everyone made it, no one dropped out.



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